VENDING STAND

M. M. Walter

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Vending Stand

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THE readers of the *Rehabilitation News* are familiar with the provisions of the Randolph-Sheppard Act passed by Congress in 1936, which provides for the operation of vending stands by blind persons in Federal and other buildings under public supervision and control.

Since the passage of the act, there has been a plan of cooperation between the Pennsylvania Council for the Blind, the United States Office of Education, and the Pennsylvania Bureau of Rehabilitation, whereby vending stands have been established at various places in the State, and the following story portrays the possibilties for the rehabilitation of physically disabled persons in a small business of this nature.

In the fall of 1937, the State Council for the Blind received approval from the Navy Department and the United States Office of Education to establish a vending stand at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. A frame building was erected on the allotted space, eight and one-half by fifteen feet, and the stand was opened on January 6, 1938, with an initial stock of $75.00, an operator, and one assistant clerk. During the spring and summer, business grew to such an extent that it was necessary to

At Right: Personnel, Clients of State Rehabilitation Service

At Left: Interior of Vending Stand, Philadelphia Navy Yard

employ two additional clerks. Late in the fall the Navy Department approved an extension to the stand, and the building was enlarged to eight and one-half by twenty-five feet.

Because business continued to grow during the winter and spring of 1938-39, a recommendation was made by the medical officers of the Navy to increase the size of the building and provide adequate space and modernized equipment to properly operate the increased volume of business. The design for the structure of a new building to replace the old unit was approved by the officials of the Navy Yard in 1939, and the old unit was moved to a temporary location until the new building was completed in November of the same year. The accompanying photos show the complete structure (twenty-five by fifteen feet) as it stands today, and the present personnel. They are all physically disabled except one person, and former clients of the State Rehabilitation Service.

Beginning at the left-hand side of the picture, the first individual was employed in January, 1940, as assistant manager. He is thirty-four years of age and suffers blindness of both eyes caused by the detachment of the retina. His former work experience was in the retail sales field, accounting, and the operation of a private business. He was selected to act as assistant manager because of his past experience, personal appearance, reliabality, and maturity.

The next young man has no physical handicap. He was employed to assist the manager when the stand was first started and has proved to be an efficient clerk, but too young to carry the responsibilities of the business.

The third man is a sincere, responsible, dependable and energetic boy, nineteen years of age. Although he was unable to complete his public school work because of his physical condition, which is an arrested case of tuberculosis of the right hip and also defective hearing, he attended a special school for the deaf and hard of hearing and has achieved skill as a lip reader, which has been very valuable when serving customers.

The fourth individual is the owner and operator of the business. He lost his sight in 1925 as the result of an injury to his head which caused a detachment of the retina. He is totally blind, with only light perception in the right eye. Previous to his disability, he was employed as a machinist in the United States Navy for four years. After he lost his vision, he attempted to readjust his life by engaging in the making of leather goods. Although he has only a grammar school education, he creates a good impression, makes friends easily, is quite active, shows initiative, and is at ease in any situation. He was chosen to operate this stand because of his former experience in the Navy and familiarity with naval routine. Since the opening of the stand, he has proved himself to be a competent operator and is certainly a credit to the rehabilitation program in Pennsylvania.

The next young man is twenty-three years of age and has a compound fracture of the right arm. He was injured by a falling tree while working at a CCC camp. Although he had no other work experience and cannot lift any heavy objects, he is very capable in associating with people and selling light merchandise.

The last boy is visually handicapped. His loss of vision was caused by juvenile glaucoma with a continued impairment of vision in both eyes. He has night blindness but can see considerably during the daylight hours. Previous to his present employment, he worked for four years in the shipping room of a rug mill factory. He has proved himself to be a satisfactory employee.

Of the six individuals mentioned

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Studying Exceptional Children

AT THE invitation of the U. S. Commissioner of Education, John W. Studebaker, State directors and supervisors of special education for exceptional children in day schools assembled in Washington for a two-day conference on June 26 and 27, 1940. This was the second meeting of the group in Washington, a similar conference having been held in September, 1938. Numerous problems relating to State organization and supervision for mentally and physically handicapped children constituted the major theme of the conference, and plans were made for continuing committee service and group action. Of paramount importance among the declarations of the conference was the following:

This conference reaffirms its faith in the basic objectives of American education. In our democracy the objective of equality of opportunity for all implies respect for the integrity and worthwhileness of individual human personality. It implies equity of opportunity of a kind which for all children aims to adjust educational organization, equipments, procedures, and curriculum to the unique needs of individuals.

We reaffirm our faith that these principles apply with equal force to the understanding and education of those who by unfortunate circumstance of inheritance or accident present problems unique in nature and difficulty. To the handicapped child the accepted ideals and objectives in a democracy require, as for all children, opportunity for a satisfying measure of self-realization and opportunity for such appropriate and adequate care and education as may contribute to an effective degree of social and vocational efficiency.

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above, five of them are former registrants of the Bureau of Rehabilitation in Pennsylvania and all of them are gainfully employed in work which is consistent with their physical disabilities. They are qualified for their work and are very happy in their present surroundings.

Today this vending stand carries an average stock of better than $1,000.00 and, according to reports from the State Council for the Blind, is doing the largest volume of business of any stand operated by a blind man in the United States. The business is entirely free of debt, operates on a cash basis, and pays a minimum wage to the clerks of $12.50 a week. The stand is open every day in the year from 6 a. m. to 1 a. m. The men work in alternate shifts and average forty-four hours per week. The entire project is under constant supervision of the State Council for the Blind and the Bureau of Rehabilitation.

Procedure in Working with Local Advisory Boards

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interest but that, instead, he is rather a fortunate young man who has an opportunity to become fit to engage in remunerative occupation. He knows that his fellow citizens and friends are interested in his welfare. His father states that he is no longer restless, morose and unhappy, but now has a new lease on life. Needless to add, the trainee is making fine progress.

Supervisors may rest assured that when a local advisory committee is used in cases that are apparently hopeless and if the program is unsuccessful, the supervisor and the department will not receive the entire blame. However, if the program is successful the committee will feel that it has been instrumental in the success, which in turn will bring about a closer cooperation between local organizations and individuals and the Vocational Rehabilitation Department.

Hearing Aids

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The purchase of a hearing aid is not the only device for the rehabilitation of a hard of hearing person. It is not always indicated. When it is, I do not believe a state would be justified in refusing to furnish one either alone or in connection with training or other service. I have yet to be convinced that anyone can set up a graduated scale of desirable types of rehabilitation. Nor can it be decided which type of disability or which social class is the most desirable to serve. If it can be determined that the purchase of prosthesis alone will make or keep a person employed it should be done. It may be more desirable to induct one person into a job in his low employment level than to train another into a high salaried position. Someone should help us determine whether the total expenditure on a case should be based solely on his needs or on his ultimate earning capacity.

There is much that could be said concerning lip reading instruction and speech correction for the hard of hearing. Apparently, the greater efficiency in modern hearing aids has reduced the necessity for instruction in lip reading for those with moderate hearing impairments. There is always progressive deafness to consider. I still regret the relegation of lip reading instruction to "related" while at the same time arranging the report so that a case approved for lip reading goes into the "in service" classification. I used to consider the contact with the lip reading teacher and the practice class as a valuable aid in the advisement process. It was personality improvement treatment in some cases and served a most valuable purpose in the rehabilitation diagnosis. Now it seems that a rehabilitation plan must be presented before this "related" instruction can be authorized. The agent will naturally hesitate to put a case into the service status when the applicant is so upset over his hearing loss that effective advisement is not possible.

The idea of "objective approach" to our problems is discounted somewhat these days. Nothing can take the place of kindly understanding of an applicant's fears and frustration. I have at times written realistically of the emotional upset of hearing loss. I shall continue this attitude of understanding and sympathy for all our applicants even in the face of attempts to create a more detached viewpoint. But don't get the idea that emotion takes the place of careful consideration of all angles of a proposed rehabilitation plan.

Occupational Maladjustment and Tuberculosis

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opportunity to attend one of the best library schools in the country for two hours and later four hours daily while she was completing her convalescence at the hospital. As a result, a few months ago she was graduated with an excellent record as a librarian and got a job almost immediately as a chemical librarian and secretary in a large chemical plant.

She no longer has a vocation that is a mental hazard, it is related closely to her "first love," chemistry, but is well within her physical capacity and insures her adequate rest.

Thus, we see that patients with occupational maladjustments that tend to make the control of their disease difficult must be reoriented and directed into vocational fields which are mentally hygienic. No matter how well the patient might stand up physically on the job following a satisfactory "cure," we cannot afford to lose sight of the potential dangers that may lurk in a job filled with psychic trauma, such as worry, mental fatigue, and the like.

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